

## The Return

Bianca Beronio

From above, everything seemed smaller.

She looks at the pallid form in the bed, recognizes  
her own face.

It was the face of a life well-lived, she decides,  
taking in the permanent laugh lines.

Her hands seem so small now, hands worn from  
years of planting, nurturing, teaching...

In the room she recognizes family..  
And in their faces there are flashes of the past.

A baby at a breast, celebrations, weddings,  
grandchildren...

All leading to this moment.

She drifts farther away, in spite of herself.  
She fights to stay close, but something tells her to let  
the currants carry her.

*It's OK*, a voice echoes from somewhere both far  
and within, *they understand*

She feels herself turn inward and toward the voice.

“But can I hold them, just a little longer?”

*You will*, says the voice, *in other lives and other places*

But how will I know them?”

*You will know*

*We always return to those we love*

She looks at her loved ones and sees the light within them and recognizes them beyond the life just lived.

And she closes her eyes, and feels herself become stardust once more,  
ready for all the possibilities of the universe.